

DMC
Children's Hospital
of Michigan

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I am writing to fully support Senate Bill no. 789, which provides the Michigan Department of Community Health authority to temporarily schedule substances that are an imminent danger to health. As the director of the Children's Hospital of Michigan Regional Poison Center, we have been monitoring an alarming trend of increased hospital visits related to emerging designer drugs, labeled not for human consumption, but sold with intent to abuse. We have received calls about 187 patients treated in the hospital from abuse of products labeled as bath salts, or novelty items, and which contain synthetic cathinones. Two of those patients died. Ingredients were documented as MDPV in one case and methylone/butylone in another. We have analyzed a variety of these products and found a pattern of changing ingredients over time, and the use of multiple ingredients in some products. Most of those new ingredients are not currently scheduled drugs by either Michigan or federal law.

We have also been monitoring products sold as incense or potpourri, which others have analyzed and found to contain synthetic cannabinoids. We are currently in process of analyzing incense products sold in stores, and are finding that so far, all ingredients are synthetic cannabinoids that are not covered under current state or federal regulations. Our recent analysis of the incense cases found that most patients were teenagers, and 18% had concurrent inhalant abuse with computer dust products. There were 159 hospitalized exposures in 2011, and already 90 in the first two months of 2012 to these products, with 4% in children less than 19 years of age. Nearly 60% of these exposures resulted in moderate (prolonged toxicity) or major outcomes (life-threatening). There is one death in an 18 year old, who died of gunshot wound possibly related to bizarre behavior induced by incense.

Despite the poison centers' ability to work with the health department efficiently and our vital role as a sentinel of emerging abused substances, the current lack of legal authority has been insufficient to designate rapidly changing ingredients as controlled, and has resulted in widespread harm, particularly to young adults, in the state of Michigan. I believe that Senate Bill no. 789 will provide a tool that will save lives.